

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 01625 152117Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 /057 W
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R 152045Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7608
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, EC
SUBJECT: KIDNAPPING CASE ESSENTIALLY RESOLVED

REF: (A) 77 QUITO 8139; (B) 77 QUITO 8326

1. IN AN HOUR-LONG ADDRESS ON MARCH 13, ECUADOR'S NATIONAL POLICE PRESENTED AT LENGTH THE RESULTS OF ITS INVESTIGATION INTO THE KIDNAPPING AND SUBSEQUENT MURDER OF LOCAL INDUSTRIALIST JOSE ANTONIO BRIZ LOPEZ. THE POLICE ACCUSED AN UNNAMED GROUP WITH "LEFTIST TENDENCIES" OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CRIMES. SIX MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION ARE AT PRESENT UNDER POLICE CUSTODY, WHILE THE REMAINING EIGHT, INCLUDING THE RINGLEADER, REMAIN AT LARGE ALTHOUGH FULLY IDENTIFIED. ACCORDING TO THE POLICE EXPLANATION, THE GROUP INTENDED TO USE THE RANSOM MONEY EXTRACTED FROM THE BRIZ FAMILY TO PURCHASE ARMS AND START A CHAIN OF BUSINESS THAT WOULD PROVIDE COVER FOR FURTHER TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. BRIZ WAS EXECUTED WHEN INITIAL EFFORTS TO SECURE THE RANSOM FAILED.

2. COMMENT: THE POLICE PRESENTATION REVEALED THE PERPETRATORS' BASICALLY POLITICAL MOTIVATION BUT DID NOT ELABORATE. A FULLER EXPLANATION MAY BE FORTHCOMING IF AND WHEN THE EIGHT FUGITIVES ARE APPREHENDED. NOTABLE
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FOR ITS DETAIL AND ASSUMED CANDOR, THE REPORT WAS NO DOUBT INTENDED TO EASE WITH EVIDENCE OF POLICE THOROUGHNESS AND INVESTIGATIVE SKILL THE CLIMATE OF FEAR AND APPREHENSION THAT HAS EXISTED IN QUITO, ESPECIALLY IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, SINCE BRIZ' DISAPPEARANCE. THE POSSIBILITY OF THE REPORT HAVING THIS DESIRED IMPACT WAS DIMINISHED WITH THE NEWS ON MARCH 14 THAT THE

MANAGER OF QUITO'S EL TIEMPO NEWSPAPER AND HIS WERE
BRUTALLY MURDERED AT THEIR COUNTRY HOME THE PRECEEDING
WEEKEND. (FOUR SUSPECTS, BELIEVED TO BE KILLERS HIRED
BY A CLOSE RELATIVE FOR UNKNOWN MOTIVES, ARE BEING HELD
BY THE POLICE.)

3. POPULAR RESENTMENT AGAINST THE NATIONAL POLICE'S
INEPT AND OFTENTIMES ARBITRARY HANDLING OF THE BRIZ
CASE, WHICH INCLUDED HARASSMENT AND IMPRISONMENT OF
INNOCENT PERSONS, WILL LINGER. DESPITE THE CRITICISMS
AND THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR FUGITIVES, THIS FIRST
CASE OF KIDNAPPING IN ECUADOR WITHIN RECENT MEMORY HAS
BEEN ESSENTIALLY RESOLVED, AND THE REPUTATION OF THE
NATIONAL POLICE, WHICH SUFFERED FROM EARLY MALADROITNESS,
HAS BEEN LARGELY REDEEMED BY SUCCESS.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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